

	COUNCIL POLICY	
	Accessible Communities Policy	
	POLICY NO	044
	DEPARTMENT	Community & Client Services
	PROGRAM	Community Lifestyle
ENDORSED BY COUNCIL	24 February 2021 – Resolution: ORD-2021-55	

1.0 Scope

This policy applies to all Mackay Regional Council (MRC) Councillors, Employees and its facilities, services, programs, activities and information owned by or under its control.

2.0 Purpose

To provide a coordinated policy framework for the delivery of accessible and equitable MRC services, programs, infrastructure; opportunities that facilitate necessary outcomes for all residents and visitors to the MRC; and to be treated in a fair manner when accessing these services.

3.0 Reference

The Accessible Communities Policy should be read in conjunction with the following relevant documentation and legislation.

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991(Qld)*
- *Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards 2010*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Human Services Quality Framework*
- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulations 2012*
- *Multicultural Recognition Act 2016 (Qld)*
- *National Construction Code 2016*
- *Industrial Relations Act 2016 (Qld)*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011(Qld)*

This policy should be read in-conjunction with the following MRC Documents.

- Mackay Regional Council's Corporate Plan 2009 – 2016 – 2021
- Accessible Communities Action Plan 2017-2021
- Mackay Regional Council's Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
- Mackay Regional Council's Inclusive Workplace Policy

4.0 Definitions

To assist in interpretation the following definitions shall apply:

Inclusive shall mean the practice or act of creating an environment where people feel included regardless of their individual circumstances, characteristics, abilities, culture, or background.

Advocacy shall mean lobbying at Local, State and Federal levels including submitting proposals for legislative change.

Access shall mean the practice of ensuring that all members of the community will have the opportunity to access information, services, facilities and activities regardless of individual circumstances, characteristics, abilities, culture, or background.

Council shall mean the Mayor and Councillors of Mackay Regional Council.

Councillors shall mean the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors.

Employee shall mean all persons employed by MRC on a permanent, temporary or casual basis and includes persons engaged under a contract of service, and volunteers.

Equity shall mean the practice or act of ensuring that information, services, facilities, and activities are provided to the community in a fair manner regardless of individual circumstances, characteristics, abilities, culture, and background.

Human Rights Complaints shall mean a complaint about an alleged contravention of section 58-1 by a public entity in relation to an act or decision of the public entity.

MRC shall mean Mackay Regional Council.

Organisation shall mean the government organisations, community groups, not-for-profit organisations, for-profit organisations and service providers.

Fair and just shall mean the criteria to determine whether an opportunity is fair and just is:

- All reasonable steps have been taken to provide information about the opportunity.
- The person has not been unreasonably denied the opportunity.
- It will not cause 'unjustifiable hardship' to the person or the organisation providing the access.

5.0 Background

Local Governments have considerable obligations under the *Commonwealth Discrimination Act (DDA'92)*, the *Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act (1992)* and the *Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act (1992)* to ensure that their facilities, services, programs, activities and information are accessible and provide equitable services to all members of the community.

Mackay Regional Council's Accessible Communities Action Plan (2017-2021) has been developed to support this policy and stated outcomes and to provide clear strategies and actions to achieve the objectives.

Human Rights have been considered when preparing this Policy.

6.0 Policy Statement

MRC will provide its information services, facilities and activities in a manner that ensures inclusive access and opportunity to all.

MRC believes in building on existing strengths within the community to enable the Mackay Region to be a region that fosters community inclusion, values diversity and encourages participation by all in their community.

The Mackay Regional Council Accessible Communities Policy will:

- Value all people in the community;
- Recognise and build on individual and community strengths;
- Increase social, civic and economic participation by helping everyone acquire the skills and support they need to contribute and connect with the community;
- Provide a greater voice and greater responsibility by giving people a say in decisions that affect their lives and the opportunities to take responsibility for these;
- Ensure that MRC contributes to an inclusive community across the region by removing participation barriers and delivering accessible and equitable services, activities and programs;
- Ensure that MRC meets its Legislative requirements under the various relevant Acts of the State and Federal Government;
- Promote participation and inclusiveness in the community;
- Recognise and celebrate diversity in the community.

MRC will achieve this through:

- Supporting community events, activities, organisations, and services that encourage and enhance diversity, participation and well-being to address matters relating to equality of access and opportunity.
- Delivering MRC information, services, facilities, and activities in a manner that promotes access and inclusion and adheres to the approaches adopted by the Australian Social Inclusion Board and promoted by the Australian Council of Local Government:
- Building on individual and community strengths – making the most of individual's and community's strengths.
- Building partnerships – governments, organisations and communities working together to get the best results for the community as a whole.
- Developing tailored services – services working together in new and flexible ways to meet the needs of the community.
- Building joined-up services and whole of government(s) solutions – various parts and various levels of government to work together in new

and flexible ways to achieve better outcomes and services for the community.

- Removing barriers for the hearing impaired community by engaging the support of services such as Deaf Services Qld or National Relay Service, where appropriate, to facilitate participation in community events, activities and council business.
- Where appropriate making information available in large print, electronic format, Braille or other appropriate format to ensure members of the community that have a vision impairment are able to participate in council led programs, events and business.
- Recognising that, at times, community members need the support of an advocate to assist them to access and participate in the community.

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Guide and improve MRC's planning, design and implementation processes to incorporate best practice access and equity principles in the provision of facilities, services, programs, information and open spaces and in conducting MRC's activities;
- Strengthen MRC's ability to pursue equitable access through lobbying other providers of facilities, services, programs, activities, information and open spaces at local, State and Commonwealth levels;
- Raise awareness of the equitable access and discrimination issues that exist for residents and visitors to the MRC area;
- Increase representation in MRC's public participation activities;
- Strengthen MRC's ability to pursue equitable access through development assessment;
- Decrease the risk of legal action.

7.0 Complaints

Any complaints in relation to this service will be assessed and managed in accordance with MRC's Administrative Action Complaints Policy, a copy of which can be found on MRC's website.

Complaints may be made as following:

In writing to

Chief Executive Officer
Mackay Regional Council
PO Box 41
MACKAY QLD 4740

Via Email - complaints@mackay.qld.gov.au

In person at the following Council Client Services Centres:

- MRC Mackay Office – 73 Gordon Street, Mackay
- MRC Sarina Office – 65 Broad Street, Sarina
- MRC Mirani Council Office – 20 Victoria Street, Mirani

8.0 Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

1. The related documents are amended or replaced.
2. Other circumstances as determined from time to time by a resolution of Council

Notwithstanding the above, this policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than three (3) years.

Version Control:

Version	Reason / Trigger	Change	Endorsed / Reviewed	Date
1	New Policy		Council	10.10.18
2	Policy Review	Amendments as requested.	Council	24.02.2021